

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T ALGIERS 1023

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, AG, US, SS
SUBJ: GOA FOLLOW-UP TO U.S. DEMARCHE ON WESTERN SAHARA

REFS: A) STATE 072238, B) ALGIERS 0967(NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS OF MFA FOLLOWED UP ON MOST RECENT USG DEMARCHE ON WESTERN SAHARA IN MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR HAYNES. IN COURSE OF THIS FOLLOWUP MEETING, HE CAUTIOUSLY INDICATED GOA WILLINGNESS TO EMBARK ON NEGOTIATED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF SAHARA CONFLICT. HOWEVER, GOA INSISTS ON POLISARIO PARTICIPATION IN ANY SUCH NEGOTIATIONS AND COMMITS ITSELF TO ACCEPT ANY SOLUTION AGREED TO BY THE POLISARIO. IMPLICIT IN GOA APPROACH IS A USG ROLE IN BRINGING PARTIES TOGETHER AND MEDIATING IN NEGOTIATIONS. DIRECTOR GENERAL PROMISED TO CONTACT AMBASSADOR AGAIN IN FEW DAYS AFTER FURTHER CONSULTATIONS WITH POLISARIO. OUR RECOMMENDATION TO DEPT WILL BE MADE AFTER THIS NEXT CONTACT. END SUMMARY

2. DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS IN MFA, ABDELKADER BOUS-
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SELHAM, CALLED ME IN ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, FOR FOLLOWUP DISCUSSION OF MARCH 26 DEMARCH SEE REFTELS) MADE BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES IN MY ABSENCE. BOUSSELHAM OPENED DISCUSSION BY STATING GOA RECOGNIZED TWO SUBSTANTIVE ELEMENTS IN U.S. DEMARCHE: (A) EXPLANATION OF U.S. DECISION NOT TO SELL ARMS TO MOROCCO FOR USE IN WESTERN SAHARA AND MAURITANIA AND (B) CRITICISM OF GOA SUPPORT OF POLISARIO.

3. WITH RESPECT TO FIRST ELEMENT OF U.S. DEMARCHE, GOA WANTS USG TO KNOW THAT IT CONSIDERS DECISION NOT TO FURNISH ARMS TO MOROCCO AS A WISE AND COURAGEOUS MOVE THAT CAN ONLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PEACE IN THE REGION. IN THIS SENSE, BOUSSELHAM SAID, GOA APPRECIATES AND WELCOMES THE DECISION.

4. HOWEVER, WITH RESPECT TO THE SECOND ELEMENT OF THE U.S. DEMARCHE, BOUSSELHAM SAID GOA NO LONGER CONSIDERS IT PRODUCTIVE TO REPEATEDLY RESTATE RATIONALE FOR ITS SUPPORT OF POLISARIO OR TO DEBATE WHETHER THE POLISARIO OR THE MOROCCANS ARE THE AGGRESSORS IN THE SAHARA. WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT, BOUSSELHAM SAID, IS THAT THE GOA RECOGNIZES THAT, PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, NO MILITARY SOLUTION IS POSSIBLE IN THE SAHARA. BOUSSELHAM SAID HIS GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES THAT THE ONLY ENDURING SOLUTION IS A POLITICAL ONE AND THAT, FURTHERMORE, THE GOA WANTS ITS FRIENDS TO HELP THE GOA FIND THAT POLITICAL SOLUTION. HOWEVER, HE EMPHASIZED THAT ANY POLITICAL SOLUTION MUST BE REACHED WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE POLISARIO. WHATEVER THE POLISARIO ACCEPTS AS A SOLUTION WILL BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOA, BOUSSELHAM CONCLUDED.

5. I ASKED BOUSSELHAM IF I WAS CORRECT IN INFERRING THAT THE GOA WAS READY TO PARTICIPATE IN NEGOTIATIONS FOR A SETTLEMENT OF THE SAHARA CONFLICT AROUND THE CONFERENCE TABLE WITH ALL THE INTERESTED PARTIES, NAMELY THE POLISARIO, THE MOROCCANS AND THE MAURITANIANS. IN PRINCIPLE, BOUSSELHAM SAID, THIS WAS THE CASE, BUT HE ASKED ME TO WAIT A FEW DAYS BEFORE ADVISING THE USG. HE CLAIMED HE NEEDED
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THE TIME TO SOUND OUT THE POLISARIO ON THEIR READINESS TO NEGOTIATE. HE ALSO LABELLED AS FALSE THE RUMORS CIRCULATING IN PAST WEEKS THAT GOA AND GOM HAD ALREADY BEEN SOUNDING EACH OTHER OUT ON SUCH NEGOTIATIONS.

6. I ASKED BOUSSELHAM IF HE WOULD SPECULATE ON THE GROUND-RULES FOR SUCH A MEETING THAT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL PARTIES. HE SPECULATED THAT SUCH NEGOTIATIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE PRECEDED BY A PRELIMINARY MEETING OF THE INTERESTED PARTIES ON NEUTRAL TERRITORY SUCH AS AT THE UN IN NEW YORK. HOWEVER, HE FURTHER SPECULATED THAT ALL PARTIES TO THE PRELIMINARY MEETING WOULD HAVE TO AGREE TO HONOR ITS SECRECY. HE FELT SAFE IN GUARANTEEING THAT THE GOA AND THE POLISARIO WOULD ABIDE BY A CONDITION OF SECRECY. HE AGREED WITH MY STATED ASSUMPTION THAT THE PURPOSE OF A SECRET PRELIMINARY MEETING ON NEUTRAL TURF WOULD BE TO HAMMER OUT AN AGENDA FOR THE NEGOTIATIONS TO FOLLOW.

7. AS HAS BEEN THE CASE WITH ALL MY RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH GOA FUNCTIONARIES, BOUSSELHAM CONCLUDED OUR DISCUSSION OF A POSSIBLE POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE SAHARA CONFLICT WITH A REMINDER OF THE IMPORTANCE TO THE GOA OF CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT IN US-ALGERIAN RELATIONS. HE SAID, "WE ARE CALLED UPON TO TRAVEL A LONG ROAD TOGE-

THER AND WE SHARE A COMMON GOAL OF IMPROVING OUR RELATIONS IN ALL AREAS WHILE SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDING MISUNDERSTANDINGS."

8. IN CLOSING, BOUSSELHAM EXPRESSED HIS PERSONAL PLEASURE OVER THE NOMINATION OF AMBASSADOR DAVID NEWSOM FOR THE POST OF UNDER SECRETARY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS. HE SAID, "IN AMBASSADOR NEWSOM, WE WILL HAVE A MAN WHO UNDERSTANDS THE MAGHREB."

9. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST DIRECT INDICATION WE HAVE RECEIVED HERE OF GOA WILLINGNESS TO BE INVOLVED IN REACHING A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE SAHARA CONFLICT. WHILE NEVER SPECIFICALLY STATED, IT WAS IMPLICIT IN BOUSSELHAM'S REMARKS THAT THE USG WOULD ACT AS THE ORGANIZER OF THIS SPECULATED SCENARIO AND WOULD SERVE AS MEDIATOR IN THE COURSE OF NEGOTIATIONS. HOWEVER, BEFORE WE RECOMMEND A
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USG RESPONSE TO THE DEPT., I WILL WANT TO HEAR WHAT BOUSSELHAM HAS TO SAY WHEN HE CONTACTS ME AGAIN IN A FEW DAYS AS HE PROMISED TO DO (SEE PARA 5 SUPRA). NEVERTHELESS, THE FACT THAT THE DISCUSSION OF A NEGOTIATED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WAS FIRST INITIATED BY THE GOA ITSELF, LEADS ME TO BE MORE GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ITS CHANCES OF TAKING PLACE THAN IF THE USG HAD PROPOSED IT. I WELCOME ANY COMMENTS FROM THE ACTION AND INFO POSTS, BUT URGE THAT THE SECRET/EXDIS DESIGNATION OF THIS COMMUNICATION BE STRICTLY RESPECTED.
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